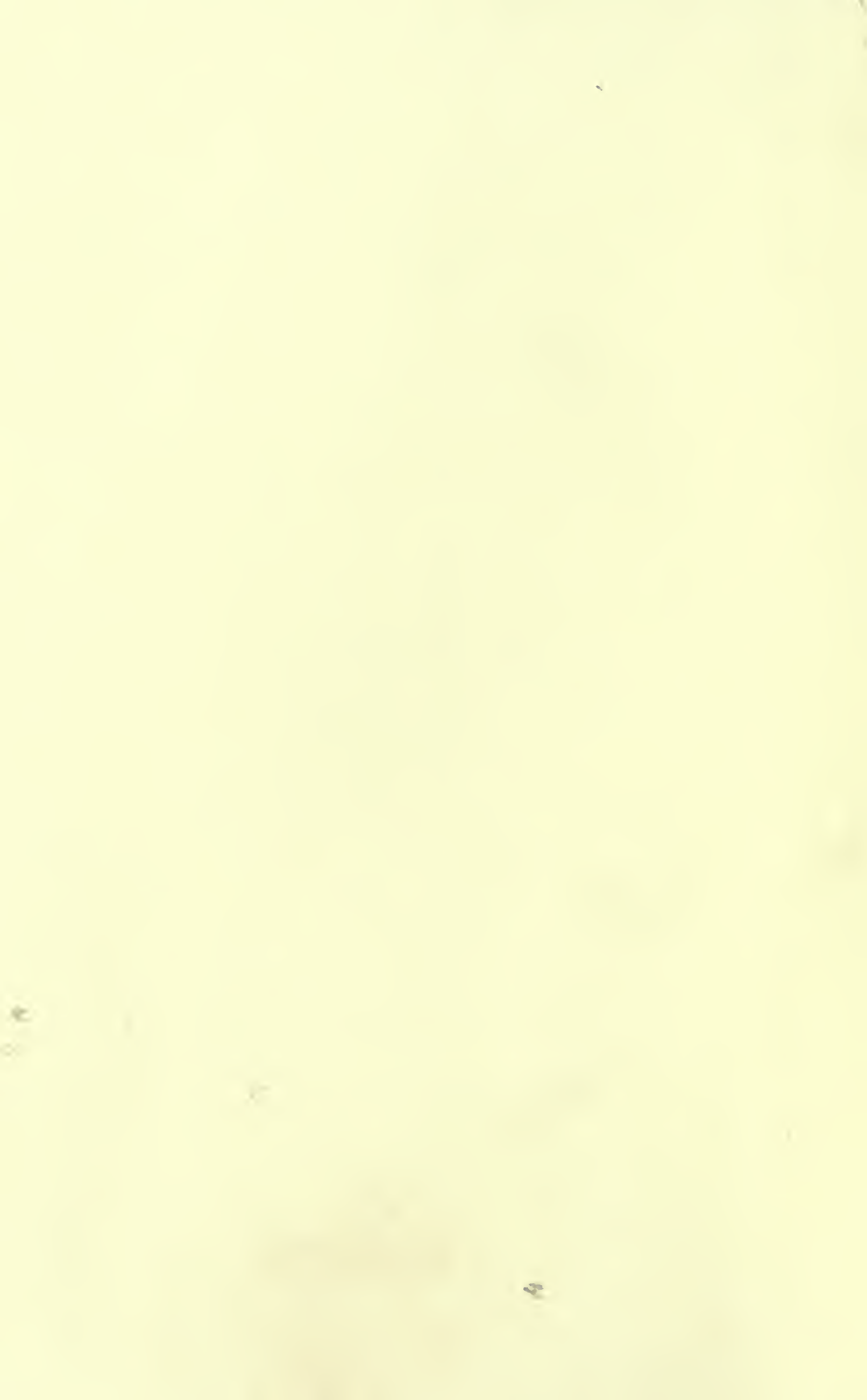




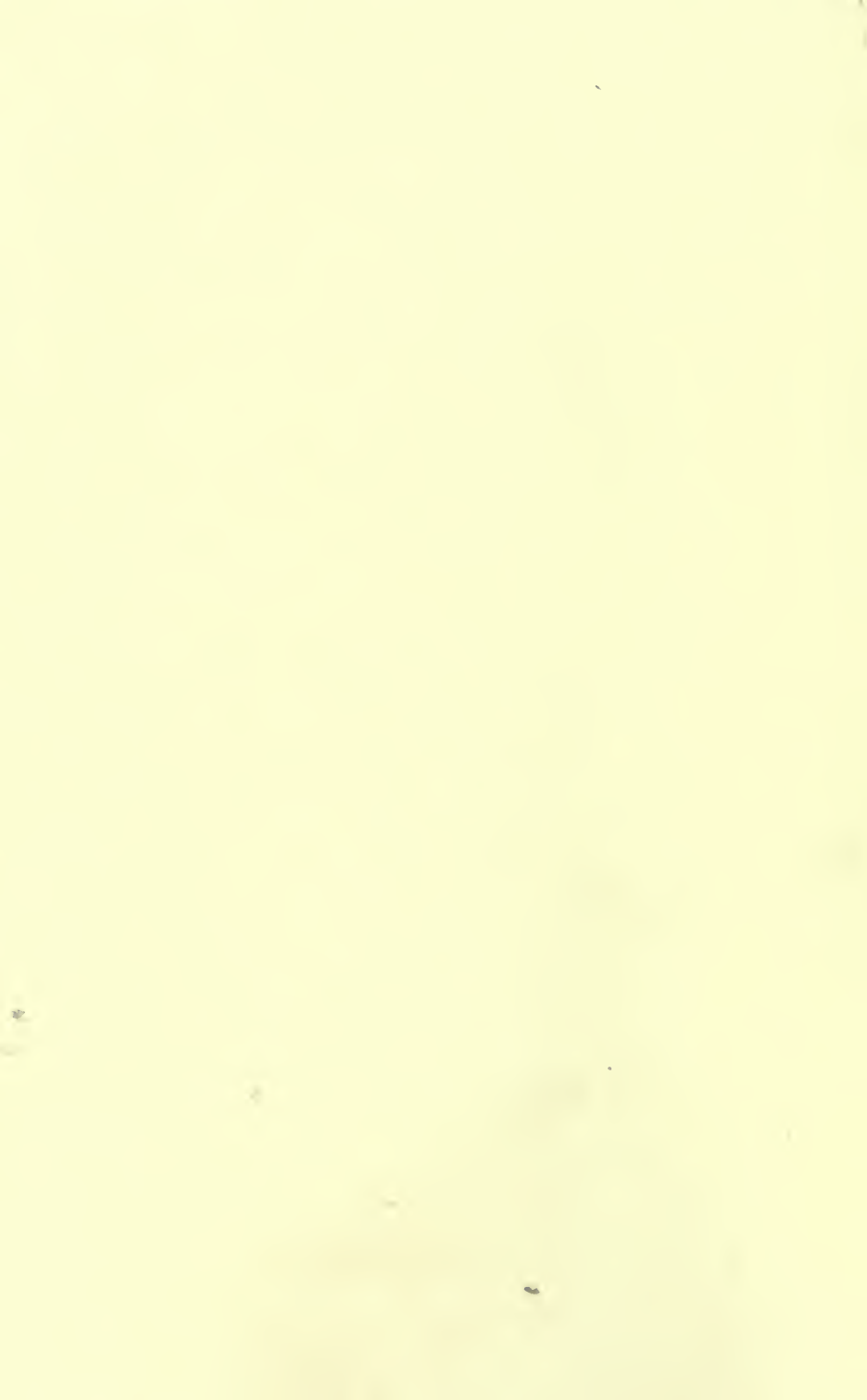


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A SKETCH  
OF  
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF LOUYSE BOURGEOIS,  
MIDWIFE TO MARIE DE' MEDICI, THE QUEEN OF  
HENRY IV. OF FRANCE.

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THE  
ANNUAL ADDRESS

OF THE  
RETIRING PRESIDENT

BEFORE THE  
PHILADELPHIA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

BY  
WILLIAM GOODELL, A.M., M.D.

Delivered June 5, 1876.

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PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
COLLINS, PRINTER, 705 JAYNE STREET.  
1876.







LOUYSE BOURGEOIS.

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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE PHILADELPHIA  
COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY :—

WHILE hunting up an historical point in the noble Library of the College of Physicians, I chanced upon an old book which deeply interested me. It was printed at Paris in 1617; the wood-cuts were rude; the type none of the best; the diction quaint; the spelling very shaky, and the least said about the punctuation and grammar the better. By no means could it be termed an *édition de luxe*, nor did it contain the information I needed; but it kept me from my work until every word, from title-page to colophon, had been read. It was the first French work on midwifery ever written by a woman,<sup>1</sup> and she, the famous Louise Bourgeois, midwife to her majesty, Marie De' Medici, the wife of Henry IV. of France. With your good leave I purpose this evening to step out of the beaten track of presidential addresses, to guide you back nearly three hundred years, and to give you a sketch of this book, a glimpse at the manners and customs of bygone times, and an insight into the character of a remarkable woman.

After the fashion of those days, the title-page of this book

<sup>1</sup> Observations diuerses sur la sterilité, perte de fruit, fœcondité, accouchements et Maladies des femmes et enfants nouveaux naiz. Amplement traitées et hereusement pratiquées, par Louyse BOURGEOIS dite Boursier, SAGE FEMME de la ROINE. Deuure vtil et necessaire a toutes personnes. DEDIE A LA ROYNE. A Paris; chez A. Saugrain, rue St. Jacques au dessus de St. Benoist deuant les trois saucieres. 1617.



is illustrated by figures more or less devotional in character. These consist of a kneeling pope, an assumption of the Virgin, several saints of either sex, and other emblematic figures. Next follows an octrain in which the authoress challenges the carping critic to show better work than hers. The reverse of this leaf is embellished by a portrait of the much bejewelled Marie De' Medici, and by a laudatory quatrain. Three pages are now devoted to a fulsome dedication to the same august personage—whiffs of incense wafted to royalty. A portrait of the buxom authoress, taken when forty-five years old, next ushers in a modest preface to the reader (*Amy Lecteur*). This portrait shows a wholesome face, with large mouth, double chin, prominent eyes, high, broad forehead; and is faithful even to two moles, which, however, my friend, the American engraver, has gallantly overlooked. The ten succeeding pages are taken up with a quatrain to the queen, sonnets to the Princess of Conty, to Madame Mout-Pencier, Madame D'Elbœuf, the Duchess of Sully, the Marchioness of Guerchevillè lady of honor to the queen, a quatrain to the notorious Leonore Galigay containing an ingenious anagram of her name, and a sonnet apiece to Madame Montglas, the royal governess, and to Madame de Helly. Then comes a shower of odes, lays, and very limp verses—for Pegasus chafes under this side-saddle—which rhyme the praises of Messieurs the Doctors Du Laurens, counsellor and first physician to the king; Heroard, physician in ordinary to the king, and extraordinary to the Dauphin; Martin, physician in ordinary to the king and queen; Hautain, Duret, De la Violette, De Maiarne, physicians to the king; capped by six flattering lines to Monsieur Seguin, royal professor of medicine at Paris, and by six more very hopeful ones to the "Thrice Blessed Ashes" of the late Messieurs Marescot and Ponson, doctors of the Faculty of Medicine at Paris.

So far the authoress by way of introduction; but now the



engraver comes in for his share. He pens a modest sonnet to his part of the work, and one to the original of it, ending with—

“To praise this dame, and her work immortal,  
Needs the brain of a god, and the pen of an angel.”

Next a certain Monsieur L. Le Maistre, whom I take to be the head printer of the Saugrain establishment, deserts his types for the Muses. And finally the book itself, seized with the same poetic ardor, rhymes a salute to the reader, and a blast to the critic. With such an introduction, this book was bound to succeed, and succeed it did to the extent of several editions, as some unrhymed physicians found out to their cost.

Now since one is known by the company one keeps, I have not the remotest idea of beginning the life of my heroine without learning something about these people. M. Heroard, for instance, so gratefully rhymed by her, was physician in ordinary to Cardinal Richelieu and extraordinary to Louis XIII. Three events distinguished him: He opened the body of Henry IV., and discovered officially, what every one knew unofficially, that Ravallac had killed him; he wrote a book on veterinary subjects, and he died in his boots at the siege of La Rochelle. So much for Heroard. As for Jean Duret, he was a famous leaguer and a fierce partisan, who said of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, that “blood-letting was as good in summer as in spring.” As he conspired against Henry IV., and was in the habit of saying “that the king ought to swallow Cæsarian pills,”—viz., the twenty-three dagger thrusts which Cæsar received—it seemed very natural to everybody, but to himself, that he was not made one of the royal physicians. But at this rate I shall hardly begin my story, much less end it, this evening, and I, therefore, refer those curious about this midwife's friends to Mons. P. Bayle, who,

although a Dutchman by adoption, cannot be readily beaten in matters of biography.

In 1563 Louise Bourgeois was born outside of the walls of Paris, in the aristocratic faubourg of Saint-Germain. This date comes from no family record, nor from any contemporaneous history, for nothing is known of her save what she herself writes. But it is obtained from the circumstance that her likeness in the first edition of her work, the copyright of which is dated December 24th, 1608, bears the legend—"Aged 45 years." This, no doubt, was even then deemed a very unwomanly act, such as Mesdames Montglas and Galligay would have shrunk from. But my hearers will soon learn that Louyse, as she spells her name, and as I shall spell it hereafter, was a woman of too much mettle to be squeamish about trifles of this kind. Her maiden name shows that no noble blood flowed in her veins; yet her father must have been a man of some means, for, as she incidentally tells us, he built several houses hard by the fosse at the Bussy gate. She was taught to read and write, and at an early age married M. Boursier, a surgeon of Paris, who not only was a pupil of the great Ambrose Paré, but for twenty years had lived in his house as his assistant. It was probably at this time that her husband first met her, for in one of her books she writes of once seeing "the great surgeon Paré, lying on his death-bed, and, although at the age of eighty, with as unclouded an intellect as ever, and as anxious as ever to learn something from those who visited him."

After the death of this famous Huguenot, her husband became the surgeon of a company of soldiers, which was soon after detailed for active service. During his absence she lived near her mother in the faubourg Saint-Germain until 1588,

when the religious feuds fomented by the Holy League broke out with unwonted fury. Paris rebelled, and, by dint of many barricades, and by the skill of the Duke of Guise, drove Henry III. out of its walls. But the king, uniting his forces with those of Henry of Navarre, marched back, and on All Saints' day, as Louyse piously informs us, advanced upon the faubourgs. When, to quote her own language—and it recalls that of the prophet Daniel—"the princes and princesses, the lords and ladies, the presidents and councillors, the judges and members of the bar, the merchants and rich tradesmen," who lived in that aristocratic quarter, did hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music of the troops of the two Henrys, they snatched up their most valuable goods and fled within the ramparts of the city proper. Our heroine, with her three children and her mother, joined the fleeing throng. That night the king's forces took the faubourgs and gutted them. They soon retired, and the city in turn sent out its lansquenets, who so thoroughly completed the work of pillage that not a stick of fire-wood, not even a wisp of straw, was left in the cellars. For strategic purposes the houses belonging to her father were soon after torn down, and she and her mother were left without means and without a home.

To get food in an overcrowded and besieged city is no easy task. The few articles of furniture she had saved were sold off day by day until all had gone, and her small family fell into great straits. But I have it on my conscience not to keep my hearers long in suspense, and they must therefore bear in mind that we are dealing with a woman not only very handy, but of rare pluck and self-reliance. Nothing daunted, she plied her needle to some purpose, and earned a pittance by working at such embroidery as "*petit point, petit mestier, broderie en iarretieres, avec des filles voisines du lieu ou nous*



*estions.*” How long this lasted I cannot say, but when the husband returned, he found the poor grandmother dead, and his family in great want. Meantime the Duke of Guise had miserably perished in the royal ante-chamber; the retributive dagger of a friar had robbed France of her king; Henry of Navarre was fighting for the crown; and anarchy prevailed at Paris. Finding it impossible to earn a livelihood, M. Boursier set out early in May, 1594, for Tours, his native city. Travelling with one’s family was in those days slow work, and during the journey great events took place. Shortly after his arrival he learned that Paris had opened its gates to the royal troops; that Henry of Navarre was now Henry IV. of France; and that order had been restored. Poor as he was, like a true Parisian, he returned to the capital, and took a small house near the convent of the Cordeliers.

M. Boursier seems to have been a man of good parts and an affectionate husband, for his wife speaks very kindly of him, and expresses her great indebtedness to him for her knowledge of midwifery; but he was without snap. His family increased more rapidly than his practice, and the outlook was not good. He no doubt fretted; but not hers was it to brood. Like Mercy, she wore much of that shrub called heart’s-ease in her bosom; and, like her, she had good backing in Great-heart. Happily, at this juncture, a kind old crone, while attending Louyse in her last confinement, suggested to her the calling of a midwife. She wisely argued that such a woman as our heroine enjoyed rare opportunities for gaining an eminence in this calling. For, said she, in words to this effect, “you can read and write, and you could have an able teacher in your husband, who is himself a skilful surgeon, and was for twenty years an assistant of the late Ambrose Paré.”

Madame Boursier, who never let a thought go to sleep, accordingly conned over the ponderous volumes of Paré, under

the guidance of her husband, and shortly afterwards made shift to deliver the wife of their porter. "I had read somewhere," she writes, "that it is not well to let a woman sleep just after her travail, and I had much ado to keep her awake. . . . Rapidly my practice grew among the poor, and little by little among those better to do. The first time I ever carried a child to St. Cosme for baptism (as was the custom of midwives in those days), I felt as if the very walls of the Cordeliers were staring at me."

No midwife could legally practise her profession without first becoming a "Sworn Matron" (*matrone jurée*), as she was termed. But, by practising among the poor, Louyse had for five years managed to evade this law. Wishing now to gain a wealthier class of patients, she sought admission into the guild of midwives. For this it was needful to get the sanction of one physician, two surgeons, and two midwives. The three former were complaisant enough; but not so Mesdames Dupuis and Peronne, two ancient virgins, I will engage, and of much verjuice. Human nature was three centuries ago what it now is, and history is but a poem whose words are men, whose refrain is the iteration of human passions. "They (the midwives) set a day for me to meet them," she writes, "and asked the nature of my husband's business. Learning it, they refused to enroll me, leastwise Madame Dupuis, who said to the other: 'Good lack, my companion! my heart prophesies no good for us. Since her husband is a surgeon, she will have underhanded dealings with these doctors, and become a cut-purse in the market (*coupeur de bourse en foire*). We must enroll the wives of tradesmen only, who will not injure our business.' With that, she told me that my husband ought to support me, and that, if I still held to my purpose, she would have me burnt so that my ashes might be a warning to others. They so worried me by their long tirades, and churlish

speeches, that my milk turned, and I lost a fine suckling babe. The Dupuis was the worst of the two, and I mention this to show how God doth avenge those who have been wronged, when they least expect it. But that will be told in its proper place. After all the others had voted for me, she was constrained to do the same, but with very bad grace."

Being now legally enrolled, her practice rapidly extended to the gentry and the nobility. With this she was content, but good luck was storing up something yet better for her. A papal bull had divorced Henry from the licentious Margaret of Valois—"My Margot," as he playfully called her until she became everybody's Margot. The beautiful Marchioness of Beaufort, his very dear Gabrielle d'Estrées, was dead, and the monarch sought consolation in the society of the fair Henrietta d'Entragues. Her he promised to marry, but his Huguenot prime-minister looked so glum, and the blue blood of France made such an ado about it, that he salved her wounded honor with the title of Marchioness of Verneuil, and made haste to marry a daughter of Tuscany. The royal couple led no happy life. Henry kept spies over her lovers, and Marie De' Medici was jealous of his mistresses. She turned out withal a great shrew, and her temper was not a whit bettered by soon finding herself in the condition which the king and the Parliament earnestly desired. One fine morning, as they lay in bed together, she flew at him, and so scratched his face as to make him wary of her longings, and more anxious than ever for an heir. But this smacks too much of scandal, besides Capefigue,<sup>1</sup> the narrator, was something of a bigot, and no admirer of a king who tolerated the Calvinists. At any rate it is neither here nor there, and I hasten back to my story.

All France was rejoicing at the prospect of a direct heir to

<sup>1</sup> *La Ligue et Henri IV.*, Paris, 1843, p. 451.



the throne. But all Paris was gossiping about certain matters of the royal household pertaining thereto, of which the king was studiously kept in ignorance. It appears that Henry, who was not over-delicate in his notions of propriety, had chosen to wait on his consort the same midwife, who had attended his much beloved Gabrielle. And who of all the world should she be, but that ancient virgin of much verjuice, Madame Dupuis, with whom our midwife had a bout. At this arrangement the young queen first pouted, then wept, and finally raved. Leonore Galligay, who wielded an influence over her royal mistress greater than She of Marlborough over Queen Anne, vowed that come what would "this beldame"—*c'est bien le mot*—should never cross the threshold of her majesty's lying-in chamber.

Proud Leonore Galligay, we shall often repeat thy name in this sketch; yet hold not thy head so high, for little dost thou reckon what fortune has in store for thee. Oh Seer! reverse thy plaid and tell us of the future:—A royal coach stands blocked in a narrow street; stealthily one mounts a wheel; quick steel-strokes flash, and France mourns a king. I see a kingdom misruled by a queen, and she in turn by a low-born favorite, whose husband, once a peasant, is now a marshal. With a high hand they lord it over France, over rich and poor, noble and plebeian. Seven years of blood and crime crawl by, and Hark! about the Louvre the yells of an angry mob, and the shrieks of some poor buffeted wretch; quivering limbs are strewn about—the limbs of a marshal of France. Behold a dungeon and in it one who has fared sumptuously in purple and fine linen. Now she humbly craves a crust from the jailer, and a shift from his wife. I see a tribunal before which is dragged a woman. Once she ruled a queen; for that she is now accused of sorcery. The prisoner proudly answers, that her only sorcery was the influence of a strong mind over a

weak one. Once more the scene changes, and lo! a public square, and planted in it a wooden stake. Steel fetters sway from it; dry fagots lie around. A prison gate swings open, bare-headed priests and men-at-arms file out, and in their midst—ah me! ah me! the hapless Leonore.

But to return to the palace: M. Du Laurens, first physician to the queen, was in despair. So also, but even more so, was M. De La Riviere, first physician to the king. There was much tapping of each other's snuff-boxes, and much interchange of the contents, but to no purpose. The courtiers sided with the king; the ladies with the queen, and of course the latter won the day, but we are anticipating, and meantime the whole palace was in an uproar.

At this juncture Madame Président De Thou happened to fall very ill, and Drs. Du Laurens, Malescot, Hautin, De La Violette, and Ponçon met over her case. There is, gentlemen, as you know to your cost, a popular impression, that, when two or more of the faculty gravely retire together from the sick-bed to the next room, their talk is of everything but the patient. This is of course a slander; but the memorable consultation adverted to above did indeed give some color to the imputation. For having disposed of Madame De Thou—she died shortly afterwards—these grave gentlemen gossiped about court matters in general, and the queen's approaching confinement in particular. On this occasion M. Du Laurens unbosomed himself to his confrères, and laid bare his despair as only a Frenchman can. This caused a clustering of gold-headed canes, and a laying of powdered perruques together. Dr. Hautin, another physician to the king, for royalty dies hard and needs many of the faculty, now most opportunely suggested the name of Louyse Bourgeois as a substitute, in case at the last pinch the queen still refused to have the Dupuis. Now, as I have wasted some time in looking up the history of this



physician, I boldly assert that he never said a wiser thing and never did a better in all his life. Good words were spoken for her by the other gentlemen present, whose praises she gratefully rhymes in those prefatory verses. And very limp verses they are to be sure. But then their theme was not inspiring, and besides Louyse could have done better had she chosen. Of that I am sure; for have I not of late kept much in her company, and do I not know her by heart? My own unbounded confidence in her resources, whether poetic or otherwise, cannot be more neatly expressed, than by the criticism of Boileau on some pastoral ventures of Louis XIV. "Nothing, sire, is impossible to your Majesty; you wished to make bad verses, and you have succeeded."

"Never once did I even dream of such an honor," writes this artless midwife, just then recovering from the birth of the daughter who afterwards embraced her mother's profession, "although, remembering the ill Madame Dupuis had done me, I could not but wish this good fortune would befall some one else. . . . I thought it came from God, who says 'aid thyself and I will aid thee' (*ayde toy & ie t'ayderay*)."

I should like to have chapter and verse for this citation; but never mind, Louyse knows what she is about better than she knows her Bible, as you, Madame Dupuis, will soon find out. Worth the day, when you called her names, and soured her milk!

The physicians were all agreed, and so also were the ladies in waiting; but how was our midwife to get audience with the queen? how overcome the prejudices of the headstrong king? Plots were laid, delicate negotiations made, and more diplomacy wasted than was needed to unsettle the late Slesvig-Holstein question. It takes Louyse just thirty-six pages to tell very quaintly this part of her life-history, and she gets so excited in the telling of it as to run on for pages without

capitals or periods. When out of breath she dabs down a dot, and starts off afresh for another good long jaunt.

The Dupuis had the innings, and at one time it looked as if she would keep them. Our heroine's friends lost heart, but not hers the fear of failure. She had rare pluck, and pluck is luck, so I for one will back her against the odds. Hope, that hope born of genius, whispered to her from the little chamber of the brain, as Merlin from his enchanted prison to Sir Gawain, "Be not out of heart, for everything which must happen will come to pass." To make a long story short, she finally, by adroit manœuvring on the part of her friends, got an interview with the queen, just as her majesty had entered her carriage to take a drive. She was presented; "the queen looked at me for the space of a *pater* and then ordered the coachman to start." "And I went home," my hearers will probably add, "and had a good hearty cry." Not a bit of it; she sheds no tears in this book, flourishes no cambric not even over her embroidery of "*petit point, petit mestier*," and of other like womanly gear. Something there was in Louyse's face that inspired confidence, and her portrait shows it; for that look of a *pater's* length settled the business on the queen's part, but naturally enough not on the king's, for he had not yet seen her. Here was the rub. His consent had to be gained—and gained it was by a master stroke.

A threatened rupture with Spain very providentially demanded Henry's presence on the frontier. On the morning of the day fixed upon for his departure, he gave his last instructions to the queen, and told her to take Madame Dupuis with her to Fontainebleau, where she was to lie in. "The Dupuis I will not have," replied the proud daughter of Tuscany, with a toss of her pretty head, "but a middle-aged, stout, and alert-looking midwife who delivered the Duchess D'Elbœuf, and whom I saw at the Hostel de Gondy." "*Ventre Saint-Gris!*"

exclaimed the bluff king, turning to an attendant, "Send for Du Laurens at once." This unhappy court-physician, who was in the secret and wished most heartily to be out of it, let no grass grow under his feet. He was soon in the royal closet and subjected to close questioning about our heroine's antecedents. The king was informed that she, the wife of an honorable surgeon, was much thought of by the profession at large, and by Dr. Hautin in particular, whose daughter she had repeatedly waited on. But this was not enough for the cautious monarch. He bade M. Du Laurens go to her, and get the names of the dozen ladies of quality whom she had last delivered. "I wrote down for him," proudly continues our midwife, without a single italic—but italics had not yet become the fashion of female writers, and I shall therefore take the liberty of bolstering up and modernizing the context with a suitable supply of them—"I wrote down for him the names of about *thirty* of those who had *lately been delivered* by me and who *lived nearest* to me. I also sent *one of my servants* around with him to *six or seven* ladies who were yet in child-bed. Among whom were Madame Arnault, wife of the *Intendant*, Mademoiselle Perrot wife of the *Counsellor* and *niece* of Monsieur de Fresne, *Secretary of State*, Mademoiselle le Meau, wife of the *intendant* of Monsieur de Rheims, Mademoiselle de Poussemote, wife of one of the *royal secretaries*, and Madame Frecard the wife of a *rich* merchant. He also called on *Madam the Duchess* D'Elbœuf, and returned to tell me that he was *infinitely* satisfied and would be able *wholly* to content the *king* and *queen*." It was Du Laurens' best day's work, far better than the labor spent by him later in showing that Galen was more correct in his anatomy than were Vesalius and Fallopius in theirs, and that the kings of France cured scrofula by the touch at the rate of fifteen hundred cases per annum. Du Laurens was a credulous man; but then



he believed in Louyse, so I forgive him his anatomy and his receptivity. That same evening Louyse was installed midwife to the queen, and the king set out on his journey.

No bed of roses was the honor gained by our heroine. For pages she prattles on about herself in the most artless manner, jotting down her heart-griefs, and at the same time giving one of the most interesting of peeps at royalty in dishabille. The material is so rich that I hardly know where to begin and where to end. First, there was the journey to Fontainebleau in a coach, with Master Guillaume, the king's fool, on the box, and she in the rumble behind two ladies of quality. Although the distance from Paris was only thirty-five miles, it took the royal party two days, and they lodged for the night in a wretched inn with but two rooms. Next day they dined at Melun in a room unprovided with any other furniture than large stones for andirons. Here Louyse records with much gush her first bit of service to royalty, which happened at that moment to be standing on the hearth in charming travelling costume. A huge burning log started to roll off the stone andirons, when our alert midwife, whose eyes were everywhere, charged with levelled poker upon the red republican, and saved her majesty's legs. These were, however, merely inconveniences; but once at Fontainebleau her troubles began in good earnest. The queen's voracious appetite for sweets and melons gave her much anxiety, and she remonstrated with her majesty for eating them, and with her majesty's head-cook for putting them on the table and for tempting his mistress into a surfeit. Then the queen and everybody else were perpetually asking her whether *it* would be a boy or a girl. And those mad-cap maids of honor, fie on them! What pranks they played on her; how they got her

up at all hours of the night on false alarms, and otherwise teased her. Next the friends of the Dupuis did everything to make her uncomfortable at the palace. Finally, she came nigh having a quarrel with the first and the second lady in waiting, of whom each wished, if it proved a boy, to get the news first to the king. This difficulty she adjusted by agreeing to the following private signals: With Mademoiselle Renouilliere to bow her head if a dauphin were born; and if a girl, to toss up both of her chins. With Mademoiselle Gratiene to say in the former case, "*My daughter, warm me a napkin.*"

The monotony of thirty long days was at last broken by the return of the king. "The next morning I as usual waited on the queen, and was about to retire when—how the heart of me went pit-a-pat!—the king walked in." But her interview with him is so artlessly told, and so interesting as showing both the French and the manners of the time, that I shall give it in the original:—

"*Le Roy arriua qui demanda à la Royne, ma mie est cecy vostre sage femme? elle dit qu'ouy, le Roy me voulāt gratifier, ma mie, ie croy que elle vous seruira bien, elle m'a bōne mine, ie n'en doute point, ce dit la Royne. Mademoiselle de la Renoüilliere dit au Roy, la Royne l'a choisie, ouy dit la Royne, ie l'ay choisie & diray que ie ne me trompay jamais en chose que i'aye choisie, ainsi qu'elle auoit des-ja dit au Louire. Le Roy me dit, ma mie, il faut bien faire, c'est une chose de grande importāce que vous aués à manier: ie luy dis, i'espere, Sire, que Dieu m'en fera la grace, Je te croy, dit le Roy, & s'approchāt de moy, me dit tout plain de mot de gausserie, à quoy ie ne luy fis aucune response; il me toucha sur les mains, me disant, vous ne me respondés rien? Je luy dis, ie ne doute nullement de tout ce que vous me dites, Sire; c'estoit qu'estant aux couches de Madame la Duchesse [Gabrielle d'Estrées], Madame Dupuis viuoit avec*

*une grãde libert   aupres du Roy : le Roy croyoit que toutes celle de c  t estat fuss  t semblable.*"

It is a fact worthy of note that the French of this authoress and that of her contemporaries is not so soft and modern as that of the writers who flourished in the latter half of the preceding century. There is an interesting historical explanation for this anomaly. Catharine de' Medici, the mother of Henry III., had certain Italian affectations of speech, which set the fashion at the French court of toning down the asperities of the language. Such consonants as *s* and *c*, in the old French words *faict* and *vostre*, were either omitted or the *t* was doubled, as in *faitt* and *vottre*. During the wars of the League, when the court was expelled from the city and the populace were in the ascendancy, the old and harsher mode of pronunciation resumed its sway, and kept it until the time of the renaissance of French literature. It was that brilliant group of writers who flourished in the reign of Louis XIV., and notably among them Blaise Pascal, who made the French language what it is.

But from words let us return to deeds. All France breathlessly awaited the result of the queen's pregnancy. The king could not repress his anxiety, the queen her nerves and her longings. As if that could help matters, he promised her the chateau of Monceaux in case she gave him a boy. Many were the prayers offered to appropriate saints, numberless the candles burned before propitious shrines. One morning while our midwife was as usual reassuring the queen that *it* would be a boy—for her majesty needed a daily dose of reassurement on this point—the latter said: "Well, at any rate, as soon as it is born, I shall know from thy face of what sex it is." Louyse replied, that, since all emotions, whether of joy or of grief, are equally hurtful to a newly delivered woman, she would take pains that her face should tell no tales. At this



moment the king coming in and overhearing the subject of conversation, said: "Go to! midwife; if it turns out a boy, thou wilt not only not be able to keep the good news to thyself, but thou wilt shout it out at the top of thy voice; for no living woman could, under the circumstances, hold her tongue." "I begged his majesty to believe that, since the queen's life was at stake, as well as the reputation of my sex, which I was bound to sustain, I could and should hold my tongue, as he would see!" Bravo! midwife! plucky midwife! I'll engage that you'll more than keep your word, and uphold the honor of your sex. Don't I know a thing or two about you which he of France and of Navarre does not? Didn't you once slyly abstract a pair of dressing forceps out of your husband's case of instruments, "in order that you alone might have the honor" of removing a stone from a suffering woman? Did you not on one occasion defy the whole bewigged, beruffled, and besnuffed faculty of Paris? Did you not—but bless me, how I am anticipating! So God speed thee, midwife!

Eight long days more—*ciel!* what of long days!—and at midnight of September 26th, 1601, comes a tapping at her door; comes a rapping at her chamber door. It's only those madcap maids of honor, beshrew them! groaned our poor midwife, as she turned over for another nap. But stay! it's a man's voice; Pierrot's, as I am a sinner. Pierrot, *mon ami Pierrot!* what's the matter? He bade her instant attendance on the queen, and, like the loyal usher that he was, "did not give me time enough to lace myself;" did not even offer to lace her himself. Now since our heroine has by this time got her eyes wide open, and since she makes very good use of them, as well as of her ears, I shall leave her to tell her own story, as literally as obsolete phrases, quaint diction, and an

utter diregard of capitals and of the rules of punctuation will permit.

“On entering the royal chamber the king exclaimed, ‘Come in, midwife, come to my wife who is ailing, and see whether she be in travail.’ She had great pains, and I assured him that it was even so. ‘Dear heart,’ said the king to the queen, ‘I have often told thee that the princes of the blood must needs be present at thy travail. It is owing to thy rank and to that of the child, and I beg thee to submit to it.’ The queen replied that she had resolved to do whatsoever pleased him. ‘I know, sweetheart, that thou dost wish to do whatsoever I wish,’ said the king; ‘but I fear that unless thou dost summon up all thy courage the sight of them will hinder thy travail. I therefore again beg thee not to be overcome, for this is the usage observed at the first labor of a queen.’ The pains quickened, and at each one the king supported the queen. He kept asking me whether the time had come to summon the princes, and saying that I must not fail to let him know, for it was very needful that they should be present. I replied that I should not fail to give him ample time. Towards one hour after midnight, the king growing impatient at the sufferings of the queen, and fearing that she would be delivered before the princes could arrive, sent for the Princes of Conty, De Soissons, and Montpensier. . . . They came at about two of the clock, and were in the chamber nigh half an hour. The king then, learning from me that the end was not very near, dismissed them, with the request to hold themselves in readiness for an immediate summons. Monsieur De la Riviere, first physician to the king, Mons. Du Laurens, first physician to the queen, Mons. Herouard, also physician to the king, Signor Guide, second physician to the queen, and Mons. Guillemeau, surgeon to the king, were called in to see the queen, and then withdrew to a chamber near by.”



The queen was now conducted from her private bedroom to the grand lying-in chamber, to which I shall now likewise conduct my hearers. At one end of it, under a rich pavilion, stood the grand state bed, draped in crimson velvet fringed with gold. Near by, and under a smaller pavilion, were the chair of travail and the bed of travail, also covered with crimson velvet. On the latter the queen was laid, while around her sat on stools and folding chairs, the king, madam his royal sister, and the Duchess de Nemours. Now, what is very characteristic of our midwife, although well up in the sacred mysteries of millinery and of *petit poinct et petit mestier*, and a woman withal, she never once in her two books describes the dress of a single one of the grand and bravely attired company to which she introduces the reader. She means business and not pleasure, and I like her all the better for this unwomanly trait of character.

“At four of the clock,” continues the narrator, “a grievous griping—a murrain on those melons!—afflicted the queen, which caused great suffering without gain. From time to time the king made the physicians come in to see the queen, and to learn from me how matters stood. These dolours went on increasing, and soon impeded those of travail. For these the physicians asked me to prescribe, and I named certain remedies which they at once ordered from the apothecary, who also suggested several Italian simples that proved of great service. There waited on the queen two old and prudent Italian damoiselles, who had borne many children, and had got much experience of this kind in their own country. The relics of Madame Saint Margaret [not she of Valois, gentle reader, not Margot] were on a table in this hall, and two nuns of the convent of St. Germain de Prés kept on their knees and prayed without ceasing.”

“The king had ordered that no one but the physicians

should offer any advice, and this they did according to my report of the case, and in perfect harmony with me. I can truly say, that owing to the good order maintained by the king, and the courage shown by the queen, I never had greater calmness of mind. . . . The queen's travail lasted two and twenty hours and a quarter. . . . During this long time the king never left her side but for his meals, and then kept sending messengers to learn how she was. Madam his sister did likewise."

"The queen had often expressed her fears lest little Monsieur de Vendosme [the natural son of Henry by Gabrielle] should come into the room during her travail, and sure enough he did so, but she was suffering too much to note him. He stood by my side, and kept asking me if the queen would soon be well, and whether it would be a boy or a girl. To quiet him I said 'yes,' and he again asked what sex it would be. I replied, 'whichever sex it doth please me.' 'What,' said he, 'is it not already made up?' I replied 'yes, it is indeed already' a child, but it doth depend on my pleasure whether it shall be a boy or a girl.' 'Midwife,' he prattled on, 'since that doth depend on thee, be sure so to put it together as to make it into a boy.' Quotha, 'if I make it into a boy, master, what will you give me?' 'I will give thee all that thou wouldst wish, or rather all that I have.' 'I shall make it into a boy, and will ask in return nothing more than your good will.' He promised me it, and did hold me to my word."

"During these long hours, those persons [friends of the Dupuis] of whom the queen had warned me, began to shake their heads and to make disparaging remarks; but I took no heed of them, because I saw that the great pluck of the queen would bring her safely through, and because she trusted me as fully as she said she would. When the remedies had allayed

the griping pains, and the travail went on apace, I took note that the queen repressed her cries. I begged her not to do so lest her throat should swell. The king also said, 'Sweetheart, do what the midwife doth tell thee, and cry out lest thy throat should swell.' She now wished to be placed in the delivery chair, directly opposite which the princes stood. I sat on a low stool in front of her, and when she was eased of her burthen, placed MASTER DAUPHIN in the napkin on my knees, and took good care to wrap him up so well that no one but myself knew his sex."

"The king came near me, but I looked earnestly at the child, which was very feeble from what it had gone through. I called for some wine. Mons. Lozeray, one of the chief valets-de-chambre, brought me a bottle. I asked for a spoon, while the king took and held the bottle. I said to him: 'Sire! were this any other body's child, I should spurt the wine from my mouth over its body, for fear lest its weakness should last too long.' The king put the bottle to my lips, and said: 'Do to it, as thou wouldst to any other child.' I filled my mouth and spurted the wine over the child, which at once revived and tasted a few drops that I gave it. The king withdrew from me, sad and downcast, because he had seen only the face of the child, and knew not its sex. He walked up to the pavilion-door near to the fireplace, and ordered the ladies of the chamber to get the bed and linen ready. I tried to catch the eye of Madlle. de La Renouilliere in order to give her the appointed signal, and thus relieve the king's distress; but she must needs be warming the state-bed. Luckily, Madlle. Gratiennne being near, I said to her: '*My daughter, warm me a napkin.*' She at once tripped up gayly to the king, but he repulsed her as one not worthy of belief. She afterwards told me that, from the calm expression of my face, he was sure that it was a girl. She assured him



it was a boy, for that I had given her the signal agreed upon. He replied: 'She is too unmoved for that to be.' 'Sire! she told you that she would so behave.' 'True,' replied the king, 'but I do not think such calmness possible were the child a boy.' Madlle. De La Renouilliere now drew near, and, seeing the king displeased with Gratienne, stepped up to me. I made the signal agreed upon with her [viz., to bow the head]. She whispered the question to me, and I said 'Yes.' She thereupon threw back her hood (*elle detroussa son chapperon*), curtsied up to the king, and told him that I had not only given the signal, but had told her the sex. Then came the color back to the king, and up he strode to my side quite near to the queen. Putting his mouth to my ear, he whispered, 'Midwife! is it a boy?' I answered 'Yes.' 'I beg thee not to mock me, for that would be the death of me.' I so unwrapped Master Dauphin that the king alone saw that it was a boy. With uplifted eyes and with clasped hands he returned thanks to God, while tears as big as peas rolled down his cheeks. He then asked me if I had told the queen, and whether there would be any harm in his telling her. I said there would not; but begged his majesty to do so with as little emotion as possible. He thereupon did kiss the queen, and said unto her: 'Sweetheart! thy travail hath been sore, but God hath greatly blessed us in giving us what we most wanted; we have a lusty boy.' The queen at once clasped her hands, lifted them as well as her eyes towards heaven, shed big tears, and fell into a swoon. I spake to the king and asked to whom I should deliver Master Dauphin; he answered and said 'To Madlle. de Montglas, who will be his governess.' Madlle. de La Renouilliere then took him and handed him over to Madame de Montglas. The king approached the princes, embraced them, and, not perceiving the weakness of the queen, threw the door of the chamber wide

open, and called in everybody who was in the antechamber and in the grand cabinet. It is my firm belief that not less than two hundred persons came in. They so crowded the room that the attendants could not carry the queen to her bed."

"I was greatly vexed at this, and made bold to say [How plucky she is, this double-chinned midwife!] that there was no excuse for the admission of such a throng, inasmuch as the queen had not yet been put to bed. The king overheard me, and, clapping me on the shoulder, said: 'Hold thy tongue, hold thy tongue, midwife! and fret not, for this child belongeth to the whole world, and every one must needs rejoice.' This happened at ten and a half of the clock in the evening of Thursday, September 27th, 1601, the day of Saint Cosme and Saint Damian, nine months and fourteen days after the marriage of the queen. The royal valets-de-chambre were now called in, who carried the chair to the side of the state-bed, into which she was laid. I rendered her every needful service, then took Master Dauphin from the arms of Madame Montglas and carried him to Monsieur Edouard. He made me wash the babe in wine-and-water, and looked it over from head to foot before I swaddled it. The king brought the princes and many of the nobility to see it. He further bade every one attached to the royal household to come in, and then dismissed them to make room for others. Every one was beside one's self with joy, and hugged one's neighbor without regard to rank; I am told that even some noble ladies were so overcome with joy as to hug their attendants, without knowing what they did."

"Having dressed my said lord, I handed him back to Madame De Montglas, who bore him to the queen. Her majesty looked at him tenderly, and then bade my said lady to carry him into her private chamber. Monsieur Edouard

and all the female attendants were there; and what with them and what with the throngs of persons that the king kept bringing in, the room was always crowded. I am told that in the city the whole night was spent in one uproar of fire-arms, trumpets, and drums. Hogsheads of wine were broached to the health of the king, the queen, and the dauphin, and couriers sped with the good news to all the provinces and the loyal cities of France."

This is the plain unvarnished narrative of a shrewd and homely eye-witness, and bears on its face the marks of truthfulness. But to show how cooked up is the dish when royalty is served, how a turnip then becomes transmuted into a savoury ragoût, let me give what another chronicler,<sup>1</sup> and a mitred one at that, has gathered from the annals of those times: "The king, transported with delight, took the Dauphin in his arms, offering a most affecting prayer in presence of the whole court, and invoked the benediction of Heaven. He then pronounced his own blessing, and placing on his sword the infant's hand, supplicated the Almighty that he might never use it but for His glory and for the salvation of France."

"That the babe might also receive the benedictions of his people," adds the good bishop, "the king then ordered the attendants to put the Dauphin in an uncovered crib, and slowly convey him through the principal streets of Paris." But since our prattling midwife is silent about the "affecting prayer" and the "sword," about the "uncovered crib," and that infantile excursion about Paris, I am disposed to put them in the same category as other unsaid sayings, and other unperformed deeds of history. At any rate Mgr. Péréfixe is not always a safe guide in matters of history. His faith was struthious, it

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire du Roi Henri le Grand, par Messire Hardouin de Péréfixe, Evêque de Rhodéz.* Paris, 1786.



swallowed everything—even the idea that the classics were composed by the monks of the Middle Ages.

This same chatty Bishop of Rhodes—and I have ever found a bishop *in partibus* paying more attention to affairs at home than to his infidel flock—has also furnished us with another anecdote; which, as it illustrates the times under consideration, I shall, for want of a better place, here insert. When Jeanne d'Albret was brought to bed of Henry IV., her father, the king of Navarre, promised to put his will into her hands, provided she would sing him a song during her travail, "In order," said he, "that you may not give me a peevish and crying grandchild." The heroic princess was very anxious to see this will, for she had misgivings that it was drawn up in favor of his mistress. Accordingly, while the throes of labor were at their worst, she sang a song in the patois of Bearn, as soon as she heard the king, her father, enter the lying-in chamber. "It was remarked," writes this courtly priest, "that in opposition to the general course of nature, the infant was born without screaming or weeping; and it might be naturally expected, that a prince destined to insure the joy and prosperity of France, would not enter the world amidst cries and wailings." Immediately after the birth of Henry, the aged king of Navarre carried the boy in the skirt of his robe to his own private chamber, and returned with the will in a golden casket, which he presented to his daughter. He then rubbed the child's lips with some garlic, and made it suck a few drops of wine out of his golden goblet, in order, as he said, to make the disposition of his grandchild masculine and vigorous.

But it is high time to return to Marie De' Medici, whom we left just put to bed. As soon as the Dauphin was born, Madame Boursier, as she elsewhere takes pains to inform the reader, gave her royal patient a potion containing the "Queen's Powder," which, if swallowed during the first lying-in, is an

infallible remedy against after-pains in all future labors. The late queen dowager, mother to Henry III., proved its potency first on herself, and then on all her daughters. So did many other ladies of quality, and among them the Grand-Duchess of Mantua, a lady with many quarterings on her coat armorial, whom that mediæval traveller, Marco Polo, would have called a "*moult bele dame et avenant.*" So, strangely enough, did that termagant Marie De' Medici, who by its use never had, as our midwife avers, any after-pains in this labor or in her subsequent ones, although she inflicted many on France. With such an aristocratic record, the formula of this most valuable remedy I am sorely tempted to withhold; but virtue triumphs, and here it is: "Take of comfrey, one drachm; of peach-kernels and nutmeg-powder, of each two scruples; of yellow amber, half a drachm; of ambergris, half a scruple, and rub them into a powder. Of this give, directly after labor, one drachm diluted with white wine; and, if the woman has fever, one drachm also in her broth."

"When the queen was put to bed," continues Louyse, "the king had a cot placed near hers, where he lay that night. She was afraid that he might be disturbed, but he refused to leave her side. The next morning, after dinner, I found Monsieur de Vendosmè [the poor little bastard son of Henry], standing all alone at the door of the ante-chamber. He was about to push aside the tapestry, so as to go into the chamber of the dauphin, but suddenly checked himself with a startled air. 'Sirrah Master!' cried I, 'what dost thou here?' 'I know not,' said he; 'nobody doth notice me, no one now talketh to me.' 'That's because everybody, sir, hath gone,' said I, 'to see Master Dauphin, who did arrive not long ago. When they have paid their respects to him, they will talk with thee as before.' I told this to the queen, who sorely pitied the child, and bade us caress him more than



ever. 'Every one,' said she, 'doth pay court to my son, and hath forgotten this poor little fellow. That's what seemeth so odd to him, and is enough to break his little heart.' The kindheartedness of the queen was ever marvellously great."

Is not this a touching incident? and do not these simple words pierce the heart's core, and teach us more of the servility of courts than do the wisest apothegms of moralists? But prithee, gentle midwife! was it not thou who with moistened eye wert kind and pitiful to this poor waif? She of Medici douce and pitiful!—and to Gabrielle's child! Why, she was the shrew of shrews, a woman of waspish and vindictive temper, a temper that sorely tried her realm, and brought her to exile, to want, and finally to death in a Rhenish hay-loft.

France, however, was partly avenged by the medical treatment to which the queen was subjected after her confinement. For, after such a tedious labor as the queen's, Madame Boursier recommends certain measures which I sincerely hope, and have, indeed, no doubt, were adopted on the present occasion. "As soon as a woman has been delivered after a tedious labor," she writes (*Lib. I., cap. xviii.*), "a black sheep must be flayed alive, and the raw surface of its fleece put as warm as possible around the naked loins of the woman, which are thereby greatly strengthened. Next flay a hare alive, then cut its throat, and let all its blood flow into the skin, which must then be put reeking on the woman's person. This constringes the parts overstretched by labor, removes bad blood, and chases away the vapors. I have often proved the good effects of these remedies, which in winter should be kept on for two hours; in summer for one hour; afterwards a binder must be put on."

Now, lest my hearers should jump to the unwise conclusion that the fleece of a white sheep will answer as well, let me at once undeceive them. The great Ambrose Paré—who, by the

way, utilized the after-birth as our midwife did the hare's skin—most positively declares<sup>1</sup> that the fleece must be that of a black sheep. And for several centuries many were the uxorious Jasons in France, and many the Argonautic expeditions after the black fleece. For a remarkable case in point: at the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, the grandson of Louis XIV., the dauphiness suffered greatly from the curse pronounced upon Eve—for it affects those clad in samite as well as those in camlet. M. Clement, the fashionable accoucheur of the day, thereupon gave orders to wrap the naked body of his noble patient in the reeking fleece of a black sheep. The butcher in attendance skinned the bleating animal in the antechamber, and, anxious to do his duty well, entered the lying-in chamber with the gory fleece. In his haste he forgot to close the door after him, and in rushed the poor flayed sheep, to the great dismay of the lords and ladies in waiting.<sup>2</sup> M. Dionis, a contemporary physician, in commenting on this practice,<sup>3</sup> adds the further information, that the ladies in waiting were so frightened by the bloody apparition, and the dauphiness so incommoded by the remedy, that in her two succeeding labors the butcher was dispensed with. And well he might be. Faugh! M. Clement.

Another feature of Madame Boursier's practice was to keep her patients over-heated, and withal rigidly on their backs for nine full days. The same M. Dionis, who flourished towards the close of the seventeenth century, narrates of his day, that "after their travail, ladies of quality do not leave their beds for nine days, and that it is the fashion during this time to close all the windows, to darken the room, and to burn candles."<sup>4</sup> This custom is corroborated by a very interesting

<sup>1</sup> *De la Génération*, cap. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Cornhill Magazine*, October, 1875, p. 435, from *Curiosités Historiques*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Accouchemens*, Paris, 1724, p. 327.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Lib. IV., p. 330.

letter from Henry IV. to the faithful Rosny, Duke of Sully, which the industrious Mgr. Péréfixe has unearthed from the State archives. In it he writes the day after the queen's delivery: "Come, my friend, to see me; but we must not speak of business during the first week after my wife's being brought to bed; for we shall be sufficiently employed in preventing her from catching cold." From these friendly lines, and from the collateral evidence furnished above, I am in hopes that for nine full days this wicked and much bundled-up queen lay sweltering on her back, and that, in apparel and figure at least, Marie De' Medici bore no resemblance whatever to Venus de' Medici.

The wrongs of France being thus prospectively avenged, I return with a lighter heart to the narrative of my heroine. "On the 29th inst. I went to see Monsieur the Dauphin. His usher, Bira, opened the door. Finding the room occupied by the king, his sister, the princes, and princesses, who came to assist at his baptism, I was minded to retire. 'Come in, come in,' said the king, who saw me; 'it's not for thee to withdraw.' Turning to Madame and to the princes, he said: 'Why!'—*Comment* is the exclamation here used by our modest midwife, but the translator is willing to bet the odds that *Ventre Saint-Gris* was the mot used by royalty on this occasion—'Why! I have seen many persons, but never one, whether man or woman, whether in battle or otherwise'—not even at Ivry, your Majesty, where your white plume led the thickest of the fray—'so brave as that woman there. She held my son in her lap, and looked around her with a face as unmoved as if she held nothing of value; and yet it was the first dauphin that France has seen these eighty years.' 'Sire!' quotha, 'I told your Majesty that on it depended the queen's life.' 'True,' rejoined the king; 'and I told my wife that, seeing that as it was she had swooned away for joy, no



one could have behaved more prudently than you. Hadst thou acted otherwise, my wife would have perished. I shall, hereafter, call thee *Ma Résolue*.' He offered me the position of body attendant to Monsieur the Dauphin, with wages equal to those of his nurse. I thanked his Majesty, but added that a trustworthy woman was already hired, and that I wished to pursue my own calling, so as to be the more competent to wait again on the queen. I attended the queen for nearly a month, and then, at her request, staid eight days more, so as to accompany her back to Paris."

Madame Boursier now goes on at length to tell how she saved the Dauphin, who afterwards became Louis XIII., from having a very improper wet-nurse. With those alert eyes of hers, she noticed the poor condition of the woman's child, and then set her own husband to work out the nurse's record—which was not good. The occasion demanded all her pluck, but she was quite equal to it. She then describes the birth of Madame Elizabeth, the first daughter of France, which took place at 9.30 A.M., on Friday, November 22d, 1602. This princess inherited her father's features, and was afterwards espoused to Philip IV. of Spain. The queen was delivered in the same chamber as before, but this time on the bed of travail instead of on the obstetric chair. No persons were present besides the favorite, Leonore Galligay, the physicians, two court ladies, and the maids of honor.

Next comes the birth of Madame Chrestienne, Christina of Bourbon, who married Victor Amadeus, Duke of Savoy. This took place at the Louvre on Friday, the 10th of February, 1606. This time the *chair* was used, and the labor proved an easy one, but the queen lost heart at having two daughters in succession. Her gallant husband, however, as the loyal midwife takes pains to assert, never exhibited any disappointment, but made as much of them as he did of the dauphin, and con-

soled her with the hope of fortunate alliances for these daughters. "The queen's lying-in went on smoothly, and during it I received an honor at the hand of her majesty. One day while Madame Conchini [Leonore Galligay] was by, I drew nigh to the queen to do her some service. I had on that day a brand new wrapper (*manteau de chambre*). The queen said, 'Sirrah midwife! thou lookest jaunty, and that doth please me.' My said lady replied, 'Madam, if it doth please you to see her bravely attired, you can readily bring it about.' 'Yes; but I wish her to wear something showing that she belongeth to me, something that no other person will dare to wear.' 'Madam, you can allow her to wear the velvet hood, which doth distinguish your nurses, and which no other persons dare to put on.' 'Well said,' rejoined the queen, 'and I regret not to have thought of it before.' With that she bade Monsieur Zocoly, her tailor, go to the silver safe and fetch velvet for to make me some hoods. Behold how it happened that I am the first midwife who has ever worn this badge. I am told that the two midwives of the queen dowager of Henry III.—for one died, and she had to get another—wore simply the velvet collar and the heavy gold chain. I have the sole honor of delivering the queen and of waiting upon her lyings-in; no other woman can share it with me. Had it pleased God to have spared our good king, I should have hoped to wait on her to the extent of his pleasure." When our midwife sat to M. Hacquin for her portrait, what head-gear did she wear, to be sure, but this very hood. How bravely it becomes her, my readers can see for themselves by turning to her likeness.

The account of the birth of Monsieur the Duke of Orleans contains so many interesting details jotted down by this gossip and alert midwife, that I cannot forbear to translate it. "The queen left the city in May to go to Fontainebleau for



her lying-in. While she was walking in the grand gallery, about five of the clock in the afternoon, she felt so sharp a pain as to make her return very quickly to her private apartment. Other pains followed in such rapid succession that she was hard put to in getting undressed; four of them were very grievous ones. The upholsterers and chambermaids were at once sent for in great haste to get everything in readiness. The queen lay on her bed of travail, but arose from it whenever she pleased. After the first severe pains, she continued for three hours free from any others. The king, not feeling well, had laid him down on the state-bed, but he called me to him to learn how matters were going on. I told him that the pains had stopped, and that the travail was not enough advanced for me to make out how the child offered. When he learned that the pains had returned, he again sent for me, and, in the presence of M. Du Laurens, asked the tidings. I begged his majesty not to be alarmed, for, although the child was coming by the feet, it was small, and the queen's great pluck and good pains would bring all right. The king said, 'Midwife, I know that thou dost hold the life of my wife and that of her child more dear than thine own, therefore do thy best. But should danger arise, thou knowest that that man of Paris who delivereth women is here, we have him in waiting in the grand closet. I truly hope that there will be no need of him, for the fear caused by his presence would put her life in jeopardy, to say nothing of the fact that no woman in the world is more ashamed of being seen by a man. Go to her.'"

Now "this man of Paris who delivereth women" happened to be M. Honoré, and, as we shall see before long, Madame Boursier's great rival. No one could have been more unwelcome to her, for she was—well, she was a woman, and the least bit jealous of a rival. We may, therefore, rest assured

that after making a deep courtesy to the king, she defiantly tossed up her two chins and muttered, "This man of Paris, indeed! too much of grace! No, I thank you, no M. Honoré for me, and I'll take good care that leastwise he don't stir from the grand closet. On that, Sire, you can depend. This man of Paris, indeed!"

"I betook me to the queen, and, by helping her pains, made shift presently to deliver her safely of as tall, and slender, and fine a boy as ever I laid eyes on. The general rejoicing beggars description. The king sprang up gayly from his bed to share in the joy of the whole court. Never before nor since was M. Honoré in waiting during the travails of the queen, either at the court or at Fontainebleau. On this his only occasion, he never so much as put foot into the queen's chamber, either before or during her labor. His presence there was brought about by some of his friends who wished him the honor of seeming to be needed. Even M. Du Laurens begged me to call him in, if anything unusual took place—for the queen was much bigger this time than when she was a breeding with her other children. I told him that I could discover nothing so out of the way as to need his help for my royal mistress. M. Du Laurens often supped with me in my private room. I invited him because I wished it to be known that full amity existed between us. The queen was delivered on Monday night, April 16th, 1607, at ten and a half of the clock."

This was Gaston, Duke of Orleans, who died November, 1611, in infancy, before he received a church baptism. "His body," she adds, "lies in the vault of St. Denis, near that of the king, his father. His heart is with the Cœlestins, and his entrails before the grand altar of St. Germain en Laye."

The queen's next confinement took place at Fontainebleau "on Friday, April 27, 1608, on the fête day of St. Mark the

Evangelist, at 9.30 of the morning," as our exact midwife informs us. As the details of this labor are also quite curious, I shall offer no apology for giving them. "She was taken ill during the absence of the king, who had gone to inspect the grand canal which he was having constructed, and she was delivered before his return. The young Lomenie, now the treasurer of Monsieur, carried the news to the king, who returned with great dispatch to see the queen and Monsieur. He gazed on them with extreme delight, and much embraced the queen for giving him so handsome a boy. It was a fine fat child, which looked fully a month old. The queen was delivered in the bed of travail. It is worthy of note that the child came into the world gazing at the sky (occipito-posterior). This is by no means common, for not one in a hundred children comes in that manner, although girls are falsely said to be so born. Of all the children that I have taken, not thirty came thus. I deemed this mode of birth so good an augury for him and for France, that I was ravished with joy. And, in effect, since those who look upward to the sky have nothing earthly about them, all persons of judgment who heard of this circumstance attributed it to the unspeakable blessings and charities of the king and queen, and to the homage and happiness inspired by them. The whole court was merry and blithe; everybody hugged his neighbor. I remember, among other things, that Madlle. Renouilliere, first lady of the chamber, meeting one of the royal valets-de-chambre, was so courageously kissed by him that she had not a tooth left in her mouth but the one of his which he left behind. Every one joyfully returned thanks to God. Mons. d'Argouie, treasurer of the queen, drew near to embrace me just as I had finished dressing Monsieur. The queen saw him coming, and warned me of his purpose. I said"—

Now I protest, gentlemen, that I thought our midwife was



about to say: "Go to! little Master Treasurer, no familiarities with *me*, if you please. Madlle. Renouilliere may—fie on her!—*graciously* permit the loss of *her* teeth; but come you a step nearer, and as sure as my name is Bourgeois, I'll fetch you a box on the ear that will make you see every sign in the zodiac and the Great Bear to boot." To my great surprise, she did not say this, or anything like it, but—

"I said: 'La! madam, then he will look on my neck no larger than a mouse on a flitch of bacon.' The queen's lying-in was very comfortable, and I waited on her as I did of yore."

The birth of the unfortunate Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I. of England, is next described in the following language:—

"Madame, the third daughter, was born in Paris, at the Louvre, on Thursday evening, November 26th, 1609, at ten and a half of the clock. The Duchess Dowager of Guise and her daughter, the Princess of Conty, were at that time visiting her majesty. They, knowing what had happened at the other births,"—The sense here is a little obscure. Can the midwife mean that they feared the promiscuous hugging and kissing?—"were anxious to be gone. The Princess of Conty was, on account of her ill health, allowed to go; but her mother was detained by the queen. For some time back the queen had kept a turner in the state chamber, who made wooden chaplets of St. Francis. These she bestowed on the princesses and on some of the ladies of quality. The lathe, together with all the tools of this chaplet-maker, was now hustled out of this apartment, in which the queen was soon after delivered."

By this time Louyse had come to the conclusion that the office of midwife to her majesty brought more honor than gold. This appears to have been a sore point with her; for in her "Advice to my Daughter," she beseeches her not to attend ladies of quality at their country-seats. For however large

the fee, it could not make up for the loss of disappointed city patients, who would never again employ her. She reminds her that, "as the late M. Hautin used to say, '*small brooks make large rivers.*'" Possibly the queen had at this time given her one of the aforesaid chaplets of St. Francis, which was very good in its way, but not as a fee, since the beads were of wood. At any rate, our midwife was dissatisfied with her wages, and, as usual, made bold to speak out her mind.

"It was during this lying-in that I explained to Madame Conchini the pecuniary loss incurred by me, during the two months' time spent near her majesty. I told her that the best families never re-engaged my services, when once I had failed them; and that having now nothing but my perquisites I found myself getting old, and with but little practice and very small means. She graciously repeated this to the queen, who begged the king to give me a salary of 600 ecus (\$900). The king was willing to give but three hundred. 'I will give thee,' said he, 'a pension of 300 ecus. In addition, every time my wife has a son thou shalt have 500 ecus. This will make 800 ecus, without counting the gifts thou wilt receive from the princesses and ladies of quality. When a daughter is born thou shalt have 300 ecus besides thy pension. For the birth of a boy doth demand a larger reward than that of a girl. Counting back from the birth of our king [Louis XIII.] he ordered me to be paid at the rate of 500 ecus for the boys and 300 ecus for the girls. The queen in addition gave me sometimes 200 ecus. The king also said to me 'My son will be a powerful monarch and will, in addition to thy pension, promote thy welfare and that of thy family. Since thou hast so skilfully waited on my wife, thou shalt never want.' I was accordingly by royal warrant put on the roll of pensioners." But the dagger of Ravallac annulled the king's promises and disappointed her expectations. For as she very naively goes on



to say: "This was in December, and in the following May the king perished. Thus at one and the same time, I lost all; for since then I have drawn my pension only. I have no reason for complaint, for I have never ventured to petition for more. Madam the Marchioness d'Ancre [Lenore Galligay] graciously gave one of my sons the office, which he still holds, of cloak-bearer to Monsieur. She sent for me and bestowed it when I least expected it."

Yet Madame Boursier received far better wages than some other royal midwives. In 1470 Dame Margery Cobbe, midwife to that fair widow, Mistress Elizabeth Woodville, the queen of Edward IV., had a stipend of ten pounds sterling, for delivering her of Edward V. in the "gloomy sanctuary of Westminster." The same salary was bestowed in 1503 on Alice Massey, "mydwyfe" to Elizabeth of York, queen of Henry VII. At the birth of the Princess Mary in 1605, Dame Alice Dennis, a contemporary of Madame Boursier, and midwife of Anne, queen of James I. of England, was rewarded with a dole of one hundred pounds sterling. But on this occasion everything was conducted on an unusually magnificent scale. "The queen's child-bed," complains a disaffected subject, "and other necessary provisions for that time cost £52,542." While Sir Dudley Carlton, of the royal household, writes to a friend, "There is much ado about the queen's lying down, and great suit made for offices of carrying the white staff, holding the back of the chair, door-keeping, cradle-rocking, and such-like gossips' tricks."<sup>1</sup>

Following the chapters devoted to a description of the queen's labors is one containing the dates of the births and of the baptisms of "the children of France under Henry IV. of very

<sup>1</sup> *English Midwives*, by J. H. Aveling, M.D., London, 1872. p. 31.

glorious memory." In it this loyal midwife recites in full their names, and those of their illustrious god-fathers and god-mothers—and, since royalty is labelled with a bead-roll of names, this takes up some room. For certain reasons, which I have not been able to discover, the baptism of the first three children was put off for a number of years, and finally took place on the same day, viz., Sept. 14, 1606.

The Duke of Orleans died four years after birth without at least a church baptism. While the two youngest, viz., the Duke of Anjou and Henrietta Maria of England, were baptized several years after birth, and on the same day, viz., June 15, 1614. This baptismal record closes one of the most curious and entertaining historical fragments extant. In interest, it is rivalled only by that marvellous narrative of the siege of Metz, which Ambrose Paré has left us.

Bear with me a while longer, for I like this midwife too well to part company with her just yet. After the birth of the Dauphin her practice so rapidly increased, that by 1609 she had delivered more than two thousand women. Among the midwives of Paris she stood foremost, and would have been content but for two "men-midwives," who were then in great repute. There was Maistre Charles Guillemeau, surgeon to the king, and Monsieur Honoré—a murrain on him!—who as early as 1600 had begun to be in great request by most of the ladies of quality. With them her relations were consequently neither pastoral nor idyllic. At a mistake of the former physician's she sneers with mordant sarcasm. Whenever the chance offers she gives the latter a spiteful peck, even to withholding and to misspelling his name. In one place she sarcastically alludes to him as "that man of Paris who delivers women" (*cet homme de Paris qui accouche*

*les femmes*). On another occasion she writes, "I performed this operation (version) in the presence of Messieurs Hautin, Duret, and Seguin, and of that surgeon who the most frequently delivers women. He wished to help me, but I refused, knowing that I was able to do it without risk to the lady." Once, as we have seen, she took very good care to keep him twiddling his thumbs in the royal closet, so near and yet so far, while she was waiting on her majesty, and putting elbow-grease on the legs of a very young prince. In narrating a case of lingering labor, she piously crosses herself and returns thanks to God for permitting her to receive the child before the arrival of "M. Honnoré," who had been sent for. While deploring that immodesty and wantonness of the women of her day, which led them to call in male physicians, she adds "M. Honoré knows well to what I refer, for a vast number (*une infinité*) of coquettes declare that, even in ordinary labors, they prefer him to a woman." To such a pitch does this good woman and good hater carry her jealousy, that she claims as her own a mode of staying a flooding—viz., by breaking the membranes and turning the child—which it is manifest that she first saw him put into practice. These facts go to show that Astruc<sup>1</sup> is wrong in dating the employment of male physicians from Dec. 27, 1663, when, from motives of secrecy, our former acquaintance, that Knight of the black fleece, Julien Clement, was called in by Louis XIV. to deliver the frail Duchesse de la Valliere.

Notwithstanding a large practice, she in 1608 took the time to write the work on obstetrics on which I have so freely foraged. Although very desultory in character, and more or less tinged with the superstitions of the times, some of which still hover around the lying-in bed, it contains good matter,

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire Sommaire de l'Art d'Accouchements*, Paris, 1766, p. xxxviii.

and evinces no little common sense. Much of it is borrowed, and, I am sorry to say, without credit, from Ambrose Paré's analogous work, which was published thirty-six years before hers. This edition of her book is in tone and temper very respectful to the profession, with whom she evidently was on excellent terms. As before shown, she sounds their praises in very grateful and very harmless rhymes. M. Seguin, her especial favorite, is compared

———“ *Comme d'une merveille*

*Qu'il doit tenir sa place un jour entre les dieux.*”

She proudly boasts that “the whole medical body is represented in our family.” For, in effect, her husband was a surgeon; one of her sons entered the guild of apothecaries; the husband of one of her daughters was a physician, and the other daughter not only became a midwife but married a surgeon.

In order that the inverted womb should not be mistaken by midwives for the after-birth, of which deplorable error three examples are given, and in order to prevent other like fatal blunders, she “begs Messieurs our doctors in medicine to so far gratify the public as to permit midwives to see dissections.” To further this end, she suggests that the midwives should contribute their quota towards defraying the needful expenses, and offers to be the first contributor, because she “recognizes its great value.” The only sly hit at the profession, that I can find, is the request that surgeon-accoucheurs, when called into a case by a midwife, would either withdraw the after-birth with more patience, or else leave its removal to the midwives. For she has observed that they generally get it away in such a mangled state, as to make it impossible to say whether it is whole or not, and thus, to the woman's jeopardy, a retained fragment may be overlooked.



In 1617 there was issued from the press of Abraham Sau-gram, a second edition of her work enlarged by a second book. This edition appears to be a very rare one, and the copy in the library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia is perhaps unique. At least Malgaigne,<sup>1</sup> Raige-Delorme,<sup>2</sup> Brunet,<sup>3</sup> and Haller,<sup>4</sup> who had access to all the libraries of France and of Germany, designate the edition of 1626 as the second one, and were evidently unacquainted with the edition of 1617. It was this time dedicated to the Queen Dowager, then regent of France; for Henry IV. was now dead, and his son Louis XIII. a mere lad. Besides some clinical observations, a chapter on "*How I became a Midwife*," and "*Advice to my Daughter*," this book describes the lyings-in of the queen and the "*Births and Baptisms of the Children of France*." During the eight years which had elapsed from the date of the first edition, some unpleasantness had manifestly sprung up between her and the leading practitioners of Paris. She now does not regard them with the same respect, and rhymes no more limp sonnets to their praise. Nor does she disguise her feelings of hostility towards some of them. In experience and knowledge Louyse Bourgeois had gained, but not in her orthography; that staid as faulty as ever. But Spelling Bees were not then the fashion, and for the matter of that she kept very good company. One hundred years later Anne of Great Britain and Ireland, and Sarah of Marlborough, tripped badly in their spelling—so badly as would put to blush a miss not yet in her teens. While even so late as 1745 the Pretender signed himself, by the blessing of God, the grandson of "*Gems*," and vowed to

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Medico-chirurgicale de Paris*, Mai, 1848.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionnaire en 30*, Article, *Obstetrique*.

<sup>3</sup> *Manuel du Libraire*, Paris, 1860.

<sup>4</sup> *Bibliotheca Medicinæ Practicæ*.



uphold his honor with his "*sord*,"—no wonder the "good cause" failed, and that Charlie died "o'er the water."

The "*Advice to my Daughter*," which forms the closing chapter of this interesting book, embodies much good sense and shrewd mother wit. It consists of fifty odd pages, which I am sorely tempted to transcribe in full, but time forbids. Considering the license of the times, it is remarkable how closely the text can be followed without deodorization. Save the matter of half-a-dozen sentences, very little need be expunged. After a tribute of thanks to her husband for teaching her the calling of a midwife, and after a prelude of idle mythological talk about Lucina, Mercury, and Phanarote, the mother of Socrates, in which she displays no little vanity, she begins her advice in earnest.

"Never preserve," she enjoins on her daughter, "the amniotic membranes, or caul, with which the head and the shoulders are sometimes covered, since sorcerers use them."<sup>1</sup> "Do not, like quacks, keep secret from physicians and wise persons, such good remedies as you may know." This good advice, however, I am sorry to say, she did not wholly act up to; for yielding, as she frankly confesses, to the importunities of her daughter, she did not divulge the formulæ of her best remedies. She tells her daughter to have the fear of God always before her eyes; to attend to the poor gratuitously, and to treat them with the same care as she would the rich. She implores her not to admit, like other midwives, any unmarried woman into her house for secret confinement, and adjures her, in God's name, never to be wheedled into giving remedies for the purpose of bringing on a miscarriage. It is

<sup>1</sup> With much good sense for those times, Ambrose Paré remarks, in 1573, that "popular credulity regards that child fortunate which is born with a caul; and so it is, and the mother also, for it betokens an easy labor." (*De la Génération*, cap. xvi.)

true enough that cant was rife in those days, that Deity was invoked on very slight provocation, and that religious convictions were grotesquely inconsistent. Even one century later, that cruel and licentious mistress of Louis XV., the frail but orthodox Pompadour, deplores, in a letter still extant, the irreligious tendency of the hour. "When a nation ceases to fear God, and to honor the king," she piously writes to a friend, "it becomes the lowest thing in nature; and this is the condition of France at this time."

But no such sham piety lurked in the breast of this good midwife, who was too outspoken to be aught but honest in her religious convictions. She had once helped a lady through a miscarriage brought on at three months, and was horror-struck at the thought that a child fully formed after God's own image, and soul-bearing, had been foully dealt with. Ever after that she set her face as flint against this dreadful sin, and, in her book, constantly denounces it as such. Dear midwife, for this I honor thee, and will of thy own few faults make mention brief.

This whole chapter of advice to her daughter contains very interesting matter. It treats of many curious topics, but most of it is taken up in bewailing the degeneracy and the wantonness of the women of her day, that led them to prefer male physicians to midwives. The daughter for whom she writes this sound advice—an advice which does our midwife much credit—is the one who adopted her mother's calling. Both Madame Boursier and her husband took great pains with the medical education of their daughter. In addition, by the connivance of the head-midwife and of the presiding sister-of-charity, she gained admittance to the Hôtel-Dieu, where she stayed off and on some seven months. Before reaching the age of fifteen, she had, as her fond mother proudly boasts, not only witnessed many labors, but, with her own hands, had

delivered more than fifty women. But pluck and genius is not a heritage, and, notwithstanding such advantages, she did not attain to eminence; nothing more, indeed, is known of her—not even her name.

Each of these editions of Madame Boursier's work exhibits the credulity of that century. For instance, in order to prevent after-pains, very many women made use of a syrup of maiden-hair and of sweet almonds into which a few drops of blood had been squeezed in from the navel-string. This vile (*sale*) remedy our midwife could never make up her mind to prescribe; but in its stead she vaunts that "queen's powder" to which I have elsewhere adverted. To stay a threatened miscarriage, even after falls and other severe accidents, she recommends that an eagle-stone or a loadstone be placed in the left armpit. But as she likewise enjoins the woman to be bed-fast for nine days, it is not easy to see whether the amulet or the rest was the efficient means in holding back the two hundred infants whose lives she boasts of having thus saved.

Among some very marvellous stories, she relates the following, on the authority of a very trustworthy (*honneste*) person: While a woman with her suckling infant lay fast asleep in a vineyard, "a serpent, that most subtle and crafty of beasts, who knows how to discern the good from the bad, crawled quietly up to her breast, and seized the nipple which the child had dropt. Finding her milk better than anything he had ever tasted," and the quarters very snug, he concluded to stay there. This presumption was much resented by the husband, and more by the wife; but no violence was offered lest the venomous reptile should strike his fangs into her breast. Noisome herbs to make the woman's milk bitter, domestic incantations, prayers without number, and various other polite notices to quit the premises were served on his snake-



ship to no purpose; he staid and staid, growing more contented every day, and sleeker and larger every way, until the good woman had to carry his body in a sling suspended from her neck—"which most clearly shows," sagaciously observes our authoress—and we heartily agree with her—"how very nutritious woman's milk is." At the end of ten very uncomfortable months, the woman heard of a snake-charmer, ten leagues off. To him she repaired with the intruder, to him she unbosomed herself, and from him she returned snakeless.

Another of her quaint "Observations" is corroborated by so many circumstantial details that De Foe might take a lesson from her: "I once knew a surgeon named Philippe Baudoin, a resident of Cherebourg, in Basse Normandie, who served his apprenticeship under Maistre Ambrose Paré. He saw a woman named Fleurye Gardin, wife of Richard Feré, of the parish of Toulevast, near Cherebourg, who being six and a half months gone, and at church on Christmas, suddenly felt the hand and arm of her infant protruding from her person. Being about a quarter of a league from home, she was at once helped thither by her neighbors. . . . It is manifest that the child must have been convulsed by some colic, caused by the chill which its mother caught in the church. . . . For when the woman had been put to bed, and warmly wrapt up, the child, feeling the heat, drew back its chilled arm and hand, either with little help or with none at all." The woman then went to term, without any further excursions on the part of the child, and was safely delivered in the following March. But precocious children are short-lived, and this one died on the next day.

A generous physician voluntarily gave her the receipt of a medicine which she had previously found to be sovereign for all female ailments. Mistrusting his good faith, she got it



verified through the connivance of an apothecary's assistant, who, on the sly, copied it from his master's book of recipes. The apothecary was retailing it for fifty *sols* the ounce, and had refused to sell her the secret for five hundred *ecus*. "This I now offer for a moderate price to the infinite number of matrons and virgins who need it." "God also gave me the grace to invent a plaster which restores to its place the most perverse womb. As soon as applied to the navel, it causes the womb when fallen to rise up, when too high to come down, when to one side or the other to settle in its place. It drives away the vapors, hinders miscarriages, and, when the child is misplaced, readjusts it. I thought to publish the formula of this plaster, but my daughter, with clasped hands, begged me to give it to her, urging that both she and the plaster came by the grace of God from me. Since she has chosen my own calling, I have decided to leave the secret with her, with the understanding that she shall divulge it to her brother, the apothecary, or to some other member of our family, who will then be able to supply all who need it."

In 1626 this industrious woman augmented her work by a third book. This edition is beyond my reach, and for my knowledge of it I am indebted to M. Malgaigne.<sup>1</sup> In it she sharply attacks the medical faculty, and maliciously recalls the mistake of a court-physician who, in 1603, had for five and a half months treated a lady of quality for a dropsy, which was suddenly dispersed by the birth of a lusty child.

"I describe this case," she goes on to say, "to serve as a warning to those who undertake to treat disorders of which they know nothing. . . . Every one should stick to one's trade; and when a surgeon or a midwife is called in, the authority of each should be paramount. . . . Medicine is

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Médico-Chirurgicale de Paris*, Juin, 1848, p. 376.

a science embracing many branches, such as pharmacy, and surgery with its numberless subdivisions, all of which depend more on Practice than on Theory. The late king well understood this, for at the birth of our present king, in the presence of four of perhaps the most learned of French physicians, he gave me the first place, and instructed them to give nothing to the queen without my sanction. He also told them to receive my advice and follow it, for my art grew out of experience more than out of science, and I had attended one hundred labors to their one. This it is that makes me scorn the affront put on me by some of them."

Who this physician was, and on what occasion this passage of arms took place, history is silent. I am, however, disposed to think that the offender was Charles Guillemeau, who published a very excellent work on obstetrics in the same year in which hers first appeared. My reasons for this are, firstly, that he was in great repute as an accoucheur, and consequently her rival. Secondly, he was one of the five physicians present at the birth of the Dauphin, and she takes pains to name him last—even after an Italian physician. Again, in her preface, she rhymes the praises of three of them—Du Laurens, De La Riviere, and Heroard. Of the two left unsung, Signor Guide was the body-physician to the queen, and therefore unassailable by her. By exclusion, therefore, I infer that Maistre Charles Guillemeau is here the object of her attentions. Malgaigne suggests that an attempt had probably been made to oust her from the good graces of the Duchess of Orleans, who was then pregnant. The above remarks of hers certainly look like reprisals, and in fact her third volume bears the suggestive motto—"Do not to another what you would not have done to yourself." Be the cause what it may, her usual good luck attended her in so far as securing the coveted position. But fortune served her this time an ill turn. The labor was easy,

the delivery clean, as she proved to the surgeons present, but the duchess died from childbed fever. This was an opportunity for revenge which her enemies did not neglect. At a post-mortem examination, presided over by the flower of French medicine, the record was made, and apparently in good faith, that "on the right side of the womb was found a small portion of the after-birth so firmly adherent that it could hardly be torn off by the finger-nails." This was published on June 5th, 1627; three days later there appeared a scorching rejoinder of twenty-eight pages from the pen<sup>1</sup> of our undismayed midwife. In it *Ma Resolue*, as Henry so aptly called her, goes over the symptoms of the case; recalls the fact that the after-birth was examined, and pronounced whole by the physicians present; asks why Brunier and Guillemeau signed the report when they were not present at the autopsy; why Jacques de la Cuisse, who was present, did not sign it. Why? because Jacques de la Cuisse, more competent than they, saw that this projection on the uterine wall, which they had "ignorantly and maliciously" mistaken for a fragment of the after-birth, was nothing more nor less than the placental site. A placenta indeed! "I offer to make a public demonstration to you at the Hostel-Dieu that what you hardly tore away with your finger-nails was a portion of the womb itself." . . . "By your report," she winds up with biting sarcasm, "you expose your utter ignorance of what constitutes a woman's after-birth, whether before or after labor. So does your master, Galen, who, although a bachelor and with very little midwifery practice, presumed to teach midwives by a book, which shows that he knew absolutely nothing of the gravid womb, and less of the after-birth."

<sup>1</sup> *Apologie de Louyse Bourgeois, dite Boursier, Sagefemme de la Royne mère et de feu Madame, contre le rapport des médecins, Paris, 1627.*



These arrows were barbed with truth, and they rankled. As Malgaigne observes, since the famous apology of Ambrose Paré, never had the pride of Parisian medicine been so humbled. Her vindication made quite a stir at the time, and it was even translated into German and Flemish.<sup>1</sup>

A reply was urgent, but not one of the physicians dared to make it over his own signature. An anonymous rejoinder<sup>2</sup> of fourteen pages appeared, but it was feeble and she wisely forebore to notice it. In it great surprise is manifested at her audacity in charging the faculty with ignorance, and the author complains bitterly that she had vented her spleen "on a man whom she hated without cause, and whom she had held up to scorn in one of her books."

Years began now to tell upon Louyse Bourgeois. When seventy-three years old, and in her dotage, a crafty dealer in books flattered her up to the point of communicating to the public those remedies which the clasped hands and bent knees of her daughter had so long kept secret. She at first refused, but, in view of her daughter's excellent practice, finally gave way, and in 1634 very unfortunately parted with her manuscript.<sup>3</sup> I say *unfortunately*, because the "*Recueil des Secrets de Louyse Bourgeois*," as the title runs, slops over with rhapsodies the most pitiable, and with nostrums of the silliest. It contains remedies for every imaginable disorder, and for some very unimaginable ones—from corns and vermin to mother-sickness (hysteria), and falling-sickness (epilepsy). It also recites the formula of that famous plaster, which "by the grace of God," she invented to keep the womb, the fœtus, the vapors, and everything else but her grammar in place.

<sup>1</sup> *Essais Historiques*, par M. Sue, tome ii. p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Remonstrance à Madame Boursier, touchant son apologie contre le rapport que les médecins ont fait qui cause la mort déplorable de Madame*, Paris, 1627.

<sup>3</sup> *Etudes Médicales sur l'Ancienne Rome*, par Jules Rouyer, Paris, 1859, p. 197.



It was the song of the swan, for after this we hear nothing more of *Ma Resolue*, and I must now part company with her. Where and when she died; under what sod her body lies, no one knows. Was she ever reconciled to that virgin of much verjuice, the Dupuis? Did M. Honoré ever forgive her for keeping him twiddling his thumbs in the queen's closet? Did the bewigged, beruffled, and besnuffed members of the faculty turn out to bear candles at her funeral? And Maistre Charles Guillemeau, did he, like a man, cross out that old score, and act as pall-bearer? These are questions which I should like to have answered. What I do know is, that I can't help liking this brave, chatty, and double-chinned midwife, and I for one will not grudge an aureole to Louyse Bourgeois.



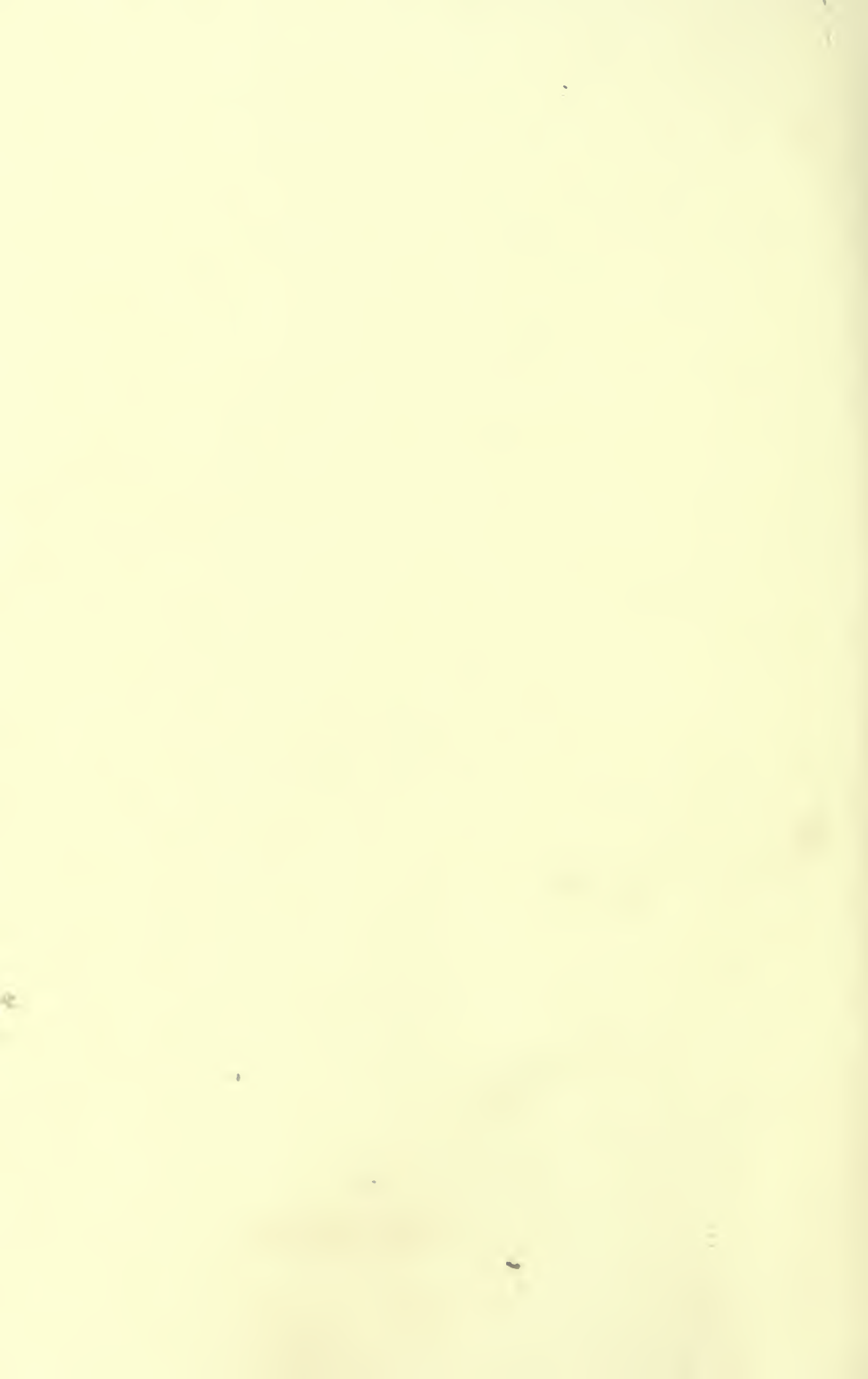






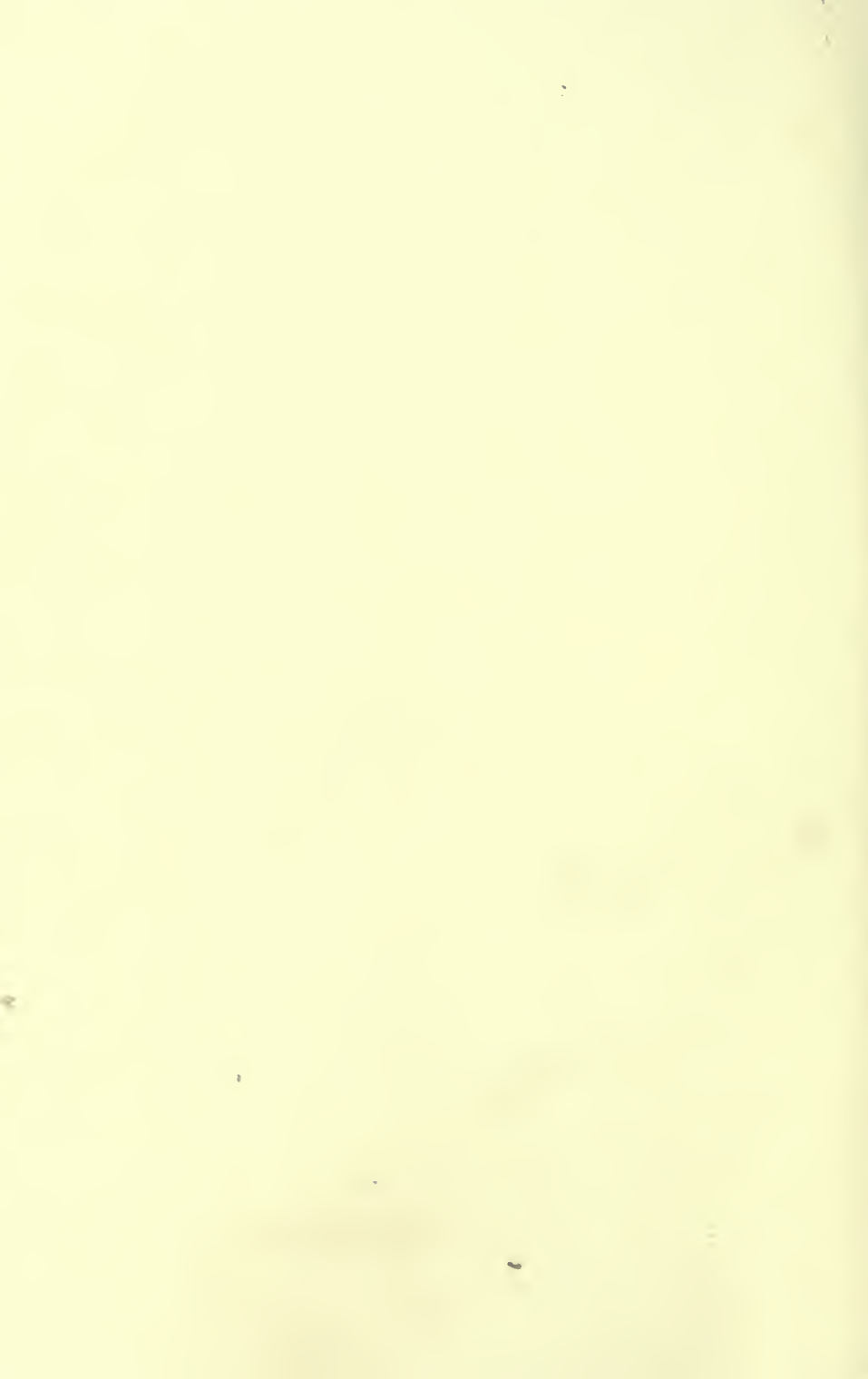












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